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DE RUEHIL #1742 1261005  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6780  
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 8520  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 7829  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3203  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 9659  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 5408  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 4147  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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UNCLAS ISLAMABAD 001742

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN'S NEW FOREIGN SECRETARY SALMAN BASHIR

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Salman Bashir has replaced Riaz Mohammad Khan as Pakistan's Foreign Secretary. Bashir--who previously served as Ambassador to China and Denmark--is a veteran Foreign Service officer. Bashir told local press he intends to focus on "economic diplomacy" during his tenure as Foreign Secretary. End summary.

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¶2. (SBU) On April 28, 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) announced Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan would be replaced. (Note: Khan reached the age of retirement three years ago but remained in his position because of three year-long extensions. End Note.) A flurry of press rumors ensued, speculating Khan was fired because of his opposition to a United Nations probe of Benazir Bhutto's assassination. Khan and the MFA, however, emphasized Khan had decided to retire for personal and health reasons.

¶3. (SBU) Pakistan's former Ambassador to China, Salman Bashir, was named as Khan's replacement and assumed his duties as Foreign Secretary on May 5, 2008. Reportedly, Riaz Khan spoke with Prime Minister Yousuf Gilani and personally recommended Bashir for the position. Bashir was selected over another front-runner, Sahfqat Saeed, Pakistan's current Ambassador to Iran.

¶4. (SBU) After his appointment, Bashir told local press he intends to focus on "economic diplomacy" between Pakistan and its allies.

Former Ambassador to China  
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¶5. (SBU) Prior to his selection as Foreign Secretary, Bashir served as Ambassador to China from March 2005 to May 2008 and worked to improve bilateral economic relations. He closely collaborated with Pakistan's Planning Division and Sino International Engineering group to produce electricity that helped manage Pakistan's growing power gap. The Chinese Embassy in Pakistan lauded Bashir for his efforts strengthen Sino/Pak relations.

Career Timeline  
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¶6. (SBU) Bashir has held the following positions during his time in Pakistan's Foreign Service:

- Mar 2005 - May 2008: Ambassador to China.
- Feb 2003 - Mar 2005: Additional Secretary at the Asia Pacific desk at the MFA.
- Jul 1999 - Feb 2003: Ambassador to Denmark.
- 1995 - 1999: Director General of the U.N. Division at the MFA.
- 1988 - 1995: Posted to the OIC Secretariat, Jeddah.
- 1985 - 1987: Director of the U.N. Division at the MFA.
- 1980 - 1984: Posted to Geneva.
- 1976 - 1980: Section Officer at the MFA in Islamabad.
- 1975: Bashir joined the Foreign Service.

#### Personal Information

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17. (SBU) Bashir was born on March 4, 1952. He holds a Master's degree in History as well as a Bachelor of Law degree. Bashir is married with two sons and a daughter.  
PATTERSON